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PSU moving forward on new residence hall on Southwest Fifth Avenue

By Fred Leeson, Special to The Oregonian May 29, 2010, 9:00AM

The university's College Station plan gains approval from the Design Commission

Portland State University will take a significant step in expanding its student housing reservoir with a 16-story, 283-apartment, multi-use building to be constructed and managed by a private company.

The new College Station Apartments, at 1965 S.W. Fifth Ave., will provide beds for about 900 students -- a big addition to PSU's current inventory of 2,200 beds. The university would like to provide about 10,000 beds by 2035.

Mark Gregory, an assistant PSU vice president, said enrollment could top 30,000 students this fall.

"We are getting bigger faster than we ever have before," he said. The long-term goal is to provide housing for 25 percent of the student body.

The new U-shaped complex will include an open plaza facing south. An unusual element in the plaza will be the two-story Victorian-era house containing the office of attorney Randal Acker. He refused to sell his building, so the bigger, taller structure will be erected around it.

TriMet bought up most of the block as part of its Transit Mall MAX project. But Acker accused the transit agency of deception when he learned that the long-range plan called for TriMet to transfer the block to PSU for a dorm. TriMet backed off.

"I'm in favor of development," Acker said. "I know the next couple of years are going to be like a war zone. That's part of development. I hope we can work together."

The building will be constructed and managed by American Campus Communities, a private company based in Austin, Texas, that owns and manages more than 60 student housing complexes throughout the nation. PSU will own the land, but the firm will manage apartments on the upper 15 stories.

The ground floor will contain an auditorium-size PSU classroom, retail outlets and a small TriMet office. New MAX stops will be added on Fifth and Sixth Avenues, immediately north of the turnaround for Green and Yellow Line trains.

Apartments on the residential floors will be divided into three-story modules each with a large common room in an attempt to create "vertical communities," said Kurt Schultz, a principal in SERA Architects, a Portland firm. The modules will be reflected in the exterior skin of brick and metal panels.

As part of the deal, the developer also will add two public benches and make improvements to the stormwater swale that is part of TriMet's light-rail Transit Mall terminus at Jackson Street, just south of the planned building.

After months of design work, the Portland Design Commission approved

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the building plan May 20 by a 4-to-1 vote. David Wark, a design commission member, said the building will add vitality to downtown's southern edge.

"It will be a great addition to the city, to PSU and to the public realm," he said.

Commission Chairman Jeff Stuhr said the building would bring vibrant student life to an area that has been "desolate." But he voted against the plan because he thought the building and a nearby recent student housing complex were too massive and didn't leave enough open space for informal student recreation.

There was no public opposition to the building at the design hearings.

--Fred Lesson, Special to The Oregonian

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Posted by **3generations**

May 30, 2010, 9:11AM

PSU needs more, smaller classroom spaces IMHO. I'd buy that before bed space. There are plenty of places to live around the tri-county area and I realize PSU is trying to attract more young people with building dorm spaces and that's OK but...It is just a difference in priorities I guess.

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Posted by **3generations**

May 30, 2010, 11:22AM

Kudos on the Smart Classrooms BTW.

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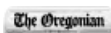
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